(c) The total number of accumulated cases pending for disposal at the end of 2007, as informed by NCDRC, is as follows:

Year	State Commission	District Forum	Total
End of 2007	4735	20409	25144

Smuggling of foodgrains

2071.SHRIMATI JAYA BACHCHAN: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is large scale smuggling of foodgrains, predominantly rice to food deficient Nepal; and

(b) if so, the steps taken by Government to curb this?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) and (b) To check smuggling activities through international borders, Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Home Affairs have their field units stationed at border check posts. Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), which is deployed on Indo-Nepal Border, has reported that during the current year, SSB has seized food articles valued at Rs.34.638 lakh on Indo-Nepal Border. SSB has also reported that to prevent smuggling of food articles and other items from India to Nepal, vigil is maintained and required preventive action is taken.

Further, Department of Revenue, Anti Smuggling Unit (CBEC) has reported that food articles valued at Rs.355.80 lakhs have been seized on Indo-Bangladesh and Indo-Nepal Borders during the current year. They have also reported that their field formations maintain strict vigil on the Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bangladesh borders to prevent smuggling activities.

Grain drain from PDS

2072.SHRI JAI PRAKASH NARAYAN SINGH: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of Government has been drawn to the reported grain drain from PDS;

(b) whether Delhi has the highest wheat diversion rate in the country and whether food diversion in North-Eastern States is no exception;

(c) if so, what measures have been taken to check the diversion of PDS wheat, rice and sugar into black market; and

(d) whether Tata Economic Consultancy Services prepared a report into the matter and if so, the details thereof and the action taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) to (d) Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) is operated under the joint responsibility of the Government of India and State / UT

Governments. The Government of India, carries out procurement of foodgrains for the TPDS, their storage, transportation and allocation to the State/UT Governments. The responsibility for allocation of foodgrains within the State/UT, identification of eligible families and issuance of ration cards to them, and supervision of distribution of allocated foodgrains to eligible families through fair price shops, rests with State/UT Governments. The State/UT Governments are mandated to ensure that the foodgrains allocated under the TPDS reach the targeted families and no leakages/diversion take place.

There had been complaints about shortcomings in TPDS, including diversion of foodgrains. So for independent feedback, the Targeted Public Distribution System was got evaluated by Tata Economic Consultancy Services (TECS), New Delhi, a report on which was received in February, 1998. TECS study reported diversion of wheat, rice and sugar in many States. Subsequently, TPDS was got evaluated by Programme Evaluation Organization (PEO) of Planning Commission and ORG Marg, New Delhi. Their reports received in 2005 also reported diversions/leakages of foodgrains, inclusion and exclusion errors in identifying targeted beneficiaries, and non-viability of operations of Fair Price Shops (FPSs). The ORG Marg reported wheat diversion in Delhi also though it was higher in the North-Eastern States.

To strengthen the TPDS, including curbing of leakages and diversion, a nine-point action plan was formulated in 2006. This is being implemented by State/UT Governments since July, 2006. Its implementation is being monitored by the Central Government. Apart from regular monitoring and review with State & UT Governments. Government has been getting functioning of TPDS evaluated from time to time through independent agencies. To streamline functioning of TPDS, steps taken by Government fall under four categories:-

(a) For improving functioning of TPDS machinery, continuously review of lists of BPL and AAY families, door step delivery of foodgrains to fair price shops, timely availability of foodgrains at Fair Price Shops, and training of staff as well as vigilance committee members are being emphasized.

(b) For greater transparency in functioning of TPDS, display of lists of BPL and AAY families at fair price shops, display of allocated quantities on web sites, adoption and implementation of revised Citizens' Charter, monthly certification of delivery of foodgrains to fair price shops and their distribution to ration card holders, and taking up publicity-cum-awareness campaign have been initiated.

(c) Improved vigilance at various levels and strict penal action against those involved in malpractices, including action against staff responsible for issuing ineligible ration cards and persons found in possession of such ration cards are being emphasized.

(d) Introduction of new technologies such as Computerization of TPDS operations at various levels, smart-card-based delivery of essential commodities, use of global positioning system on vehicles transporting TPDS commodities and bar coding of ration cards, etc. is being piloted.